Provincial

# CHILD CARE

Council

## 2002/2003 Annual Report

## May 2003

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# Report From The Chair

As I reflect on my first year as Chair of the Provincial Child Care Council, I am struck by the multitude of feelings and impressions of the past twelve months. I am in awe of many fine people across the province, individuals who work tirelessly on behalf of children and families. I am honoured to have served as chair after a long reign of superb leadership on Council. I have immense respect and appreciation for all Council members, past and present, for their work, and for their vision.

I could go on at length about the range of difficult child care issues facing our Province, even after decades of brilliant advocacy and compelling research. Council has always struggled with the opportunity of advising government versus the challenge of the complex political climate.

Both on the provincial and federal front, there is increased recognition of the opportunity that quality child care provides for a solid non-targeted approach to enhancing child and family development. Appropriate and sufficient funding from provincial and federal governments is required to support stable, quality child care in British Columbia.

It has been a difficult year for families and providers in coping with the impacts of subsidy policy changes and so we look forward to the coordinated planning that the consolidation of subsidy policy within the Ministry responsible for child care will facilitate.

Council was pleased to submit to Minister Lynn Stephens a recommended 5 year plan for child care in B.C. Over the next year I look forward to working with Council and the Minister, advising on further implementation of the long term plan. This will include ways to build on the operating fund program, and the framework that will provide equity and stability for families and caregivers.

If child care is properly funded and managed the commitment will yield an extraordinary return, far exceeding most investments, private or public. Economists around the world are highlighting that quality early childhood education and care provides a return on investment that matches or exceeds those of more traditional economic development initiatives. Child care needs to be regarded as an integral piece of a strong business plan for increased productivity across the province and as critical in building healthy communities. Council is committed to continue its work building a quality child care system for families in our province.

Wendy Cooper

## Council's Mandate

The Provincial Child Care Council was created in May 1993, by the Minister of Women's Equality, to provide advice and expertise about child care to the Minister.

In 1997, the responsibility for child care was transferred from the Ministry of Women's Equality to the Ministry for Children and Families. In July 1999, the responsibility was transferred to the Ministry of Social Development & Economic Security. In June 2001, the responsibility was transferred to the Ministry for Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services.

In April 2001, the new *Child Care BC Act* was passed. The new Act describes the Provincial Child Care Council in the following way:

(1) In this section, "council" means the Provincial Child Care Council continued under this Act.
(2) The council may make recommendations
(a) to the minister about child care under this Act, and
(b) to the minister responsible for the *BC Benefits (Child Care Subsidy) Act* about child care subsidies under that Act.
(3) The council consists of at least 14 and not more than 21 members, each of whom is appointed by the minister and one or more of whom is designated by the minister to chair council meetings.
(4) The minister may set the term of office of any member of the council.
(5) The minister may
(a) reimburse the members for reasonable travelling and out of pocket expenses necessarily incurred by them in attending council meetings, and
(b) pay the members a fee set by the minister in accordance with the general directives of Treasury Board.

## Council's Vision

At its inaugural meeting in May 1993, Council created a vision of child care for British Columbia:

- linkages between families, communities and government about child care issues,
- province-wide communication,
- a greater responsibility for child care accepted by society,
- an understanding and valuing of diversity,
- clarity in the partnerships between ministries that have an interest in child care,
- new initiatives to create partnerships with other ministries,
- coordination of all government child care initiatives,
- care for the caregiver,
- increased access to early childhood education training,
- employer roles and employee responsibilities,
- barriers to quality care identified and become a catalyst for change,

- changes to the child care system driven by what is important for families,
- quality care everywhere, and
- inter-provincial bridges that connect early childhood care and education systems into a national child care and education agenda.

## Principles of Child Care

Council has identified a series of principles to guide evaluation of new directions in child care in B.C.

- A commitment to the recommendations contained in the Child Care Task Force Report "Showing We Care" as the guiding document for change.
- Changes to the child care subsidy system that removes the "welfare" stigma associated with the present system.
- Development of a new "made in B.C. program" that includes the needs of all children, parents and child care providers regardless of location, ethnic origin or need for supports.
- Stabilization of the child care delivery system by addressing the pressing financial and administrative constraints that child care is presently experiencing.
- Implementation of ministry-led child care initiatives, which result in net benefit or improvement to the overall quality of child care in the province.
- Development of community infrastructure in a manner that enhances parents' ability to gain access to affordable, quality child care.

During the next year the Provincial Child Care Council will be working with the Minister on the development of a long term plan for child care in B.C.

## Council's Role

While most Council members are not official representatives of the specific organizations or regions where they work, volunteer and live, they do feel accountable to the constituencies from which they come. Council members deeply value their connection and communication with the community. It is invaluable in informing them about the day-to-day impact of the policies and programs that are discussed at the Council meetings. Points of view from communities across the province are seriously considered in any advice or recommendations made to the Minister.

At the same time, Council members are concerned about their ability to live up to community expectations about their role as advocates at the Council table. Council is not a decision-making body and does not have the ability to 'fix things.' Council members can and do offer their best advice to those who do make the decisions.

Council found a definition of advocacy, offered by B.C.'s Child, Youth and Family Advocate, helpful.

*"Put most simply — effective advocacy is about welcoming people into the decision-making process by ensuring that their voices are heard and considered in decisions that are made about their lives. When this is done well, better decisions are made."*

While Council is not mandated to address the specific concerns of individuals, children, families or caregivers, it does have a responsibility to ensure that a wide range of voices and opinions are heard and considered in the policy decisions that are made about child care. Council members see this as a positive and constructive approach and are committed to continuing to reflect the views heard from the community in the advice that it offers to the Minister. In this way, advocacy will continue to be an important part of the work undertaken.

## Council Meetings

Council held four meetings over the year.

April 4-5, 2003
May 23-24, 2002
September 12-13, 2002
January 30, 2003

### Highlights of Council's Meetings:

- Council put forward recommendations based on the review of the *Community Care Facility Act.*
- Council submitted to Minister Stephens a five year plan for child care in B.C.
- Council attended a key speakers address at the Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia Conference at UBC on May 23, 2002.
- Presentations to Council by government representatives from Supported Child Care, Child Care Subsidy, and Child Care Licensing.
- Presentations by community members on Aboriginal child care and seasonal worker issues.
- Discussion and development of recommendations regarding the transition of the Funding Assistance Program and Child Care Resource and Referral programs.
- Discussion and monitoring of the impacts of budget and policy changes to the Child Care Subsidy Program.
- Monitoring and development of recommendations regarding the provincial allocation of federal Early Childhood Development funds.
- Council continues to support the implementation of a "Contracts for Services Funding Model for Child Care" as reported in Council's previous draft report (of the same name) sent to the Minister in June 1997.
- Council continues to monitor the development of Supported Child Care services throughout the province.

Advocacy/Advice:

- Inter-ministerial connection
- Provincial infrastructure
- Infant/toddler space development/sustained
- Stabilization and growth
- Accountability
- Increased quality and increased quality option

## About Council Members

Council members are appointed by government for an initial one-year term of office and may be re-appointed for further two year and three year terms. Members are drawn from a number of communities and different sectors, providing a diverse and comprehensive representation to council.

| Name | Affiliation | Community |
|---|---|---|
| **Wendy Cooper, Chair** | Private operator/Multi-care facility | Coquitlam |
| Warner Adam | First Nations | Prince George |
| Lorraine Aitken | Supported Child Care/One Stop Access | Courtenay |
| Oscar Allueva | Multi-service agency | Vancouver |
| Maryann Bird | Advocacy/Past Director of Westcoast Child Care Center | West Vancouver |
| Jane Boyd | Workplace Child Care Consultant | Vancouver |
| Sheila Davidson | Campus child care/college board/multiple license | Burnaby |
| Karen Davis-Marrelli | School Age Care | Kamloops |
| Manpreet Grewal | Immigrant and Refugee/Community | Abbottsford |
| Colleen Hutton | Labour/Director child care setting | Nelson |
| Mickey Kinakin | Education | Castlegar |
| Al Lawrence | First Nations/Infant Toddler | Duncan |
| Christine MacLeod | Family Child Care | Delta |
| Mengia Nicholson | Public Health/Education | Revelstoke |
| Heather Northrup | Founding member Parents for Child Care Association | Vancouver |
| Anne Marie Prediger | Early Childhood Education | Prince George |
| Carol Richards | Family Child Care | Kamloops |
| Coco Schau | Child Care Resource and Referral | Terrace |
| Andrew Wynn Williams | BC Chamber of Commerce | Vancouver |
| Astrid Visscher | School Age Care | Vancouver |
| Carol Ann Young | Municipal Child Care Planning | Vancouver |